OKRs for personal and professional development

As you prepare for a new career in project management, it's also a great time to set some personal OKRs (objectives and key results) to track your progress towards achieving your own personal goals.

OKR Review

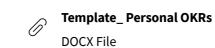OKR stands for objectives and key results. They combine a goal and a metric to determine a measurable outcome.

Objective	Key Results
Defines what needs to be achieved	The measurable outcomes that objectively define when the objective has been met
Describes a desired outcome	

Benefits of setting personal OKRs

Many of us set New Year's resolutions each year, only to find that by February, we are not much closer to accomplishing those goals than we were on January 1st. Setting personal OKRs is a strategy that can help you define clear, measurable goals for yourself and create an action plan for achieving them. Just like with company- or project-level OKRs, setting personal OKRs can turn vague and ambiguous goals into quantifiable and measurable metrics. Whether it's a personal fitness goal, a desire to spend more time with your family, or a goal to complete this certificate program, setting personal OKRs for these goals can make it easier to track their progress and determine when you've achieved them.

Write your own OKRs

Follow the steps outlined below to help you craft your own personal OKRs. You can use this OKR template ↗, or if you don't have a Google account, you can download the template directly from the attachment below.

📎 **Template_ Personal OKRs**
DOCX File

Define your "why"

Before you start on your objectives—your "what"—consider your "why." This is your mission. Why are you setting goals? For example, if you have a goal to complete this course, why is that important to you? Write that down and use it to inspire and focus your objectives.

Determine your "what"

Brainstorm possible objectives

Now that you have a clear sense of why these goals are important to you, you can start drafting your objectives. Think about the things you most want or need to accomplish in the next 30–90 days.

To help you generate a list of possible objectives, consider the following:

- What are the most important things I need to get done?
- What do I need to take action on?
- What do I need to start doing or changing?
- What do I want to improve or work on in my life or career?

Based on your responses to these questions, brainstorm a list of 3–5 possible objectives that relate to your mission.

Refine your objectives

Review your list of possible objectives and revise them to make sure they meet the following criteria:

- **Aspirational**: Is the objective inspiring and motivational? Does it ask you to challenge yourself and accomplish something you haven't before?
- **Aligned with organizational goals**: In this case, YOU are the organization, so your objectives should align with the mission you defined earlier. Does the objective help you in achieving your overall goals?
- **Action-oriented**: Does the objective indicate making a change or taking action?
- **Concrete**: Is the objective clearly stated? Would someone else understand what the objective is hoping to accomplish?
- **Significant**: Will achieving the objective make a significant impact toward your personal or professional development?

Mission: Be an ideal candidate for promotion or hire.
Objective: Deliver engaging presentations
Objective: Increase my work pace
Objective: Learn new skills and practices beyond the job description

Develop the "how"

Next, it's time to add key results, which describe how you'll achieve your objective. They also define what it means to successfully meet your objective.

Draft and refine your key results

Working with one objective at a time, brainstorm a list of 2–5 key results. To help you generate your list, consider the following:

- How would you define success for this objective?
- What metrics would prove that you've successfully achieved the objective?

Once you have a few key results, review and revise them so they meet the following criteria:

- **Results-oriented**—not a task: Do the key results state the overall outcome, rather than individual steps to get there?
- **Measurable and verifiable**: Do the key results include specific, objective metrics?
- **Specific and time-bound**: Have you clearly defined what needs to happen and by when?
- **Aggressive yet realistic**: Do the stated results stretch you but still account for potential challenges and unexpected events that could arise?

Key Results:
Attend a public speaking workshop by the end of the 1st quarter.
Watch at least one TEDTalk per week.
Deliver one presentation every two months and collect feedback.

Key Results:
Block out 90 minutes each day to work on top-priority tasks.
Delegate items to other team members to focus my time on higher priority tasks.
Take on one additional project this quarter while maintaining the same number of work hours.

Key Results:
Earn one more relevant additional certifications before the end of the 1st quarter.
Attend three networking events and schedule two coffee or lunch meetings per month with potential mentors.
Improve industry knowledge by attending 1 new workshop, conference, or presentation each month.

Creating OKRs can be an empowering way to take ownership of your goals and find meaning in your personal and professional life. Start by defining your mission, or the overall reason for creating goals and why they're important. Then determine your objectives, or what you want to achieve. Then, develop key results that will make it clear how and when you've made progress and achieved success.

For more on writing and refining your OKRs, check out these resources:

- Using OKRs for Professional Development ↗
- John Doerr's Ted Talk: Why the secret to success is setting the right goals ↗
- OKRs and SMART goals: What's the difference? ↗

Mark as completed